

Commissioner Stewart Issues Holiday Insurance Tips

Dover – Insurance Commissioner Karen Weldin Stewart would like all Delawareans to be aware of the many insurance-related issues that they may encounter as they celebrate the holiday season. ***“During the season of giving many people are not thinking of insurance, however calamity and disaster do not take a holiday”*** said Commissioner Weldin Stewart.

In recent weeks, throughout the country there has been an increase in thefts of packages left by parcel-delivery services. Delivery services usually try to leave packages in inconspicuous spots, or at least ones that aren't clearly visible from the street. But delivery workers extremely busy this time of the year and are not employed to find hiding places on front porches.

If you want to thwart the parcel thieves, consider these tips from Consumer Reports:

- Choose a shipping option that requires you to sign for delivery.
- Check on the package's delivery status online so you can try to be home when it arrives.
- Leave a note asking the delivery service to leave the package with a neighbor.
- Have the package shipped to another location where someone can receive it, like your office or a friend's home.
- Ask the delivery service to hold your package for customer pick-up.
- File a theft report immediately if you think your package was stolen, and contact your credit card company to find out if it offers a purchase-protection service that might reimburse you for stolen purchases.

Another important insurance tip for individuals giving a gift of 4-wheelers, dirt bikes, go-carts or snowmobiles- Be aware that these items are not protected against theft or damage under standard homeowner policies. To ensure coverage, you may need a rider or addition to your homeowners' policy; or you may need a separate policy. Check with an insurance agent or company about how to provide coverage for such items.

Electronic equipment is a popular gift for which consumers may not have enough coverage. Many homeowner policies have limits for certain categories of items – for example, \$5,000 total for all computer equipment in a home should it be destroyed or stolen. With the cost of computer equipment, I-Pods, video cameras, video game consoles, digital cameras and stereo and video equipment, those limits can quickly be exhausted. Check with your insurance company or agent about whether you may want to purchase additional coverage to cover your electronic goods.

Jewelry is also often subject to a category limit. Many policies have a maximum limit of \$1,000 for all the jewelry in a home in case of theft. Again, check with an agent or company if you want to expand your coverage. The recent survey revealed 59 percent of consumers have not made a list or inventory of their possessions.

Commissioner Stewart recommends that Delawareans create a home inventory, ***“Creating a detailed inventory of your possessions is one the best ways to ensure you have the right amount of homeowners or renters insurance for you and your family.”*** A recent study performed by the National Association of Insurance Commissioners shows that 48 percent of home inventories do not have receipts; 27 percent do not have photos of their property; and 28 percent do not have a back-up copy of the inventory outside the home. Additionally, 59 percent of people with inventories have not updated their inventories in more than a year, meaning new purchases and gifts may not be covered.

Commissioner Stewart suggests, “In addition to creating a paper version of a home inventory found on the Department of Insurance Website, using the “ myHOME Scr.APP.book” app for both iPhone® and Android® smart phone users will help to simplify the process. The app is free and makes it easier for consumers to document their valuables, update their inventories and store the information for easy access.”

When traveling during the holidays, people should remember that lost or stolen luggage – even if it is stolen out of your car – is often covered under their homeowners insurance. However, as always, you should check your deductible before making a claim and make sure the loss is one that is worth reporting.

If you are traveling, know what provisions of your health insurance may apply if you require medical care while away from home, especially if you are in a health plan that has a network of providers. In a true emergency situation, you should always seek immediate care at a hospital. But if your condition is not an emergency, contact your insurance company using the phone number on your insurance card for direction to an approved medical facility. Finally, almost all policies require that you contact your family doctor and insurance company within 48 hours of receiving such care.

For additional information on the topics discussed and additional insurance matters, please contact our office at 302-674-7300 or 1-800-282-8611 (toll-free in state). You can also visit our website at: www.delawareinsurance.gov